

While diet and exercise are two of the most important health issues, we need to remember that there are other basic components to our overall health and well being. Health check-ups, screenings, and immunization require a visit to the doctor or clinic, but are important to help prevent or detect problems at an early stage. Even when we do all the things we're supposed to do, there are still instances where treatment is required. Therefore, we should be aware of important facts associated with medications too!

Your Guide to Health Checkups

Regular checkups and screenings can keep you and your family healthy. If you have a family history of certain diseases, or a lifestyle or other factors that may put you at increased risk, discuss preventive health measures with your primary care physician.

Type of Screening	Ages 18-39	Ages 40-64	Ages 65 & Older
Physical Exam that includes: Health history and identification of risk factors; counseling on diet, exercise, substance abuse, injury prevention, tobacco use, and dental care.	Every 1-3 years, except dental check-ups, which should be twice a year. (After age 35, includes resting electrocardiogram & stress test.)		Once a year, except dental check-ups, which should be twice a year.
Blood Pressure	Every 1-3 years.		Once a year.
Height and weight, vision and hearing screening.	At doctor's discretion.		At doctor's discretion.
Blood Cholesterol	People over age 20 should have this screening done at least once every 5 years, more often if there are risk factors.		
Fecal Occult Blood Test (A test for blood in your stool.)		Every year beginning at age 50.	
Sigmoidoscopy (A test using a lighted instrument to look inside the rectum and colon.)		Every 3-5 years beginning at age 50.	
Pap Smear (Women)	After age 18, every year until 3 or more normal exams; then, at doctor's discretion.		Discuss with your Doctor.
Mammogram (Women)		Every year.	Every year.
Clinical Breast Exam (Women)	Every 3 years.	Every year.	Every year.
Prostate (Men)		Every year.	Every year.
Tetanus-Diphtheria Booster	Every 10 years.	Every 10 years.	Every 10 years.
Influenza (flu) Shot	At personal and/or Doctor's discretion		Every year.
Pneumococcal (pneumonia) Shot			Once, after age 65*.

* Older adults with chronic medical problems may need a booster shot after 5 years. If you aren't sure, talk to your doctor.

(Sources: NCEP, ACS, Humana)

American Cancer Society Recommendations For the Early Detection of Cancer in Asymptomatic People

Test or Procedure	Population		
	Sex	Age	Frequency
Sigmoidoscopy, preferably flexible	M & F	50 and over	Every 3-5 years
Fecal Occult Blood Test	M & F	50 and over	Every year
Digital Rectal Examination	M & F	40 and over	Every year
Prostate Exam*	M	40 and over	Every year
Pap Test	F	All women who are, or who have been, sexually active, or have reached age 18, should have an annual Pap test and pelvic examination. After a woman has had three or more consecutive satisfactory normal annual examinations, the Pap test may be performed less frequently at the discretion of her physician.	
Pelvic Examination	F	18-40 Over 40	Every 1-3 years with Pap test Every year
Endometrial Tissue Sample	F	At menopause, if at high risk**	At menopause and thereafter at the discretion of the physician
Breast Self-Examination	F	20 and over	Every month
Breast Clinical Examination	F	20-40 Over 40	Every three years Every year
Mammography***	F	40 and over	Every year
Health Counseling and Cancer Checkup****	M & F M & F	20-40 Over 40	Every 3 years Every year
<p>* Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) should be performed on men 50 years and older. If either the rectal examination or PSA is abnormal, further evaluation should be considered.</p> <p>** History of infertility, obesity, failure to ovulate, abnormal uterine bleeding, or unopposed estrogen or tamoxifen therapy.</p> <p>*** Screening mammography should begin by age 40.</p> <p>**** To include examination for cancers of the thyroid, testicles, prostate, ovaries, lymph nodes, oral region, and skin.</p>			

Cancer Facts and Figures
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Antibiotics

It's a fact.

Not taking all of your antibiotic may jeopardize your health.

Many people think it's no big deal if they don't finish every pill when their doctor prescribes an antibiotic. Sometimes when people start to feel better, they figure they don't need to complete their therapy. If this sounds familiar, you have lots of company.

A recent Gallup survey found that the majority of Americans don't take antibiotics exactly as prescribed. You can help yourself get better this winter by following these tips for taking your antibiotic medicine properly.

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

Respiratory tract infections caused by bacteria often require prompt medical attention and treatment with antibiotics. If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic, ask what to expect from the medicine, when and how to take it properly (for example, with or without food), and about possible side effects. If you're confused, ask your pharmacist or get instructions in writing. Antibiotics will not work for colds, influenza, or any other viral infection. Do not expect or insist that your doctor prescribe an antibiotic for a viral respiratory infection.

Follow directions: Take the full prescription.

Once you start to feel better, you may be tempted to stop taking your antibiotics prematurely. Take the full course of your antibiotic exactly as prescribed. If you don't take all your medication, the bacteria that causes your infection might not be killed and your illness may not improve. Some bacteria could even become stronger, causing an infection that is harder to treat. This means you may have to spend more time and money getting rid of your infection. You might even have to be hospitalized.

Don't borrow or use old antibiotics.

Specific antibiotics are effective against specific bacteria and not others. In fact, your doctor may need to get results from laboratory tests to make sure you are taking the correct antibiotic. For this reason, use only antibiotics prescribed specifically for your illness by your physician. Take all the pills as prescribed. Don't share leftover medicine with others. Don't take antibiotics yourself without a doctor's knowledge, especially pills in your medicine cabinet left over from previous prescriptions.

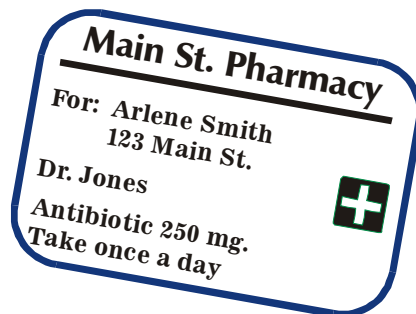
Take your antibiotic at the same time(s) each day.

Antibiotics work best when taken according to a specific schedule. Some antibiotics must be taken 3 or 4 times a day for up to 14 days, while others may need to be taken only once a day for as few as 5 to 7 days. If you make taking medicine part of your daily routine (e.g., after brushing your teeth or before going to bed),

you'll have an easier time remembering to do so. If your schedule doesn't permit you to take antibiotics at the times prescribed, be sure to tell your doctor. It's very important to adhere to the prescribed antibiotic schedule. And remember, keep all medicine out of the reach of children.

Report unusual reactions.

Some people react to certain antibiotics. Your physician should be told if you have any known allergies to medication or unexpected reactions while taking your medication. Be sure to ask your physician or pharmacist about common side effects, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or about unusual serious side effects, before you begin your treatment.



Dental Care

There are now more reasons to take care of your mouth!

Around the turn of the century, bad teeth were so common that it wasn't unusual to give a woman her first set of false teeth as a wedding present. Tooth loss seemed an inevitable part of growing older. Today we know better.

Thanks to modern dental science and technology, we have new tools and methods of preserving our pearly whites, and our gums, with a minimum of fuss and bother – but you have to take advantage of these strategies for them to work.

Did you know...

- You should spend 2-3 minutes each time you brush (at least twice a day), even if using an electric toothbrush?
- Gum disease has been linked to heart problems, as well as arteriosclerosis, poor blood sugar control in diabetics, low birth weight in premature babies, and pneumonia? Some also question an association with adult acne!
- One cup of black tea has enough fluoride to help prevent tooth decay and inhibit plaque and gingivitis – and green tea has twice as much?
- You should see your dentist if your gums bleed? (Healthy gums don't bleed.)
- Chewable antacids with calcium, prescription drugs that cause dry mouth, and lozenges that contain sugar can sabotage your “smile saving” skills?
- It's never too late to prevent dental problems by consulting an orthodontist in adulthood?
- Chewing sugar-free gum, especially with xylitol (contains extra cavity-fighting ingredient), increases saliva flow? (Saliva is a natural antibacterial and your best ally against cavities.)
- The two biggest culprits of “cavity-causers” are based on the length of time any food residue remains on the teeth and the stickiness of the food?
- Aged cheeses, unsweetened yogurt, crunchy raw fruits and vegetables are some of the foods most likely to help prevent gum disease?
- Regular bad breath can be a sign of dental problems?
- 75% of adults over age 35 are affected by periodontal disease?

(Sources include: American Dental Association, American Council on Science & Health, University of Michigan School of Dentistry)

What Else for Your Health?

The following assortment of recommendations are derived from various sources and offer proven ways to reduce illness or death from a variety of common threats to good health.

Osteoporosis: This condition is underdiagnosed and is responsible for real suffering and even death. The threat of these consequences is highest in your eighties, but the time to treat the condition is in your fifties and sixties and onward. Women with osteoporosis are at risk for vertebral and hip fractures. DEXA scan technology is safe and effective in diagnosing the condition and is generally performed in women felt to be at increased risk for bone loss. All post-menopausal women should be sure to get enough calcium and vitamin D. Talk to your doctor to see if supplements are recommended for you. Weight bearing exercise, as tolerated, is also important. There are many options for treating osteoporosis, but the best strategy is prevention before you have lost bone.

Aspirin: This is a very effective, cheap, and underutilized preventative medication. It may prevent up to 40% of sudden death in patients who didn't know they had heart disease. The effect in stroke is probably more modest, but still likely to be significant. At low doses (e.g., one aspirin every other day or a baby aspirin daily) it is unlikely to cause serious stomach problems such as ulcers. Ask your doctor for advice.

Folate: Intake of this B vitamin may help correct problems with elevated homocysteine levels (a risk factor for heart disease). A multivitamin usually contains enough of this nutrient.

Tobacco: Its use is a major risk for heart and pulmonary disease as well as head and neck, lung, and other cancer, atherosclerotic vascular disease including circulatory problems (including impotence), and skin aging. The nicotine patch and other delivery systems have helped people quit. A newer use of Zyban has also helped. If you've tried to quit and relapsed, don't think of it as a failure, think of it as your first success – then try again! Most quitters, who remain successful, admit to quitting “cold turkey.”

Safe Driving: Wear seat belts, observe the traffic laws, and watch out for other drivers. Don't drive if you have a medical condition or medication that interferes with your reflexes or response time. Similarly, if you are suffering cognitive decline, or simply the natural changes of aging, to the degree that you would be unable to respond appropriately to an emergency situation, avoid driving. The test of a safe driver is not being able to steer a car on a well lit, dry city street; but the ability to be safe at all times. The legal and personal consequences for you and others can be significant. If you drive intoxicated, on medication, or impaired due to aging or infirmity and injure someone, you risk not only remorse, but financial and even criminal responsibility – which can be devastating.

Sleep: Adequate sleep is as vital to health and peak performance as exercise and good nutrition, for many reasons. Aim for 7-8 hours (avoiding naps), but be sure to reach at least a minimum of 6 hours straight. Some studies are now showing a potential for an increased risk of heart attack, stroke, and mortality by consistently getting less than 6 hours of sleep a day. Sleep disorders have already been linked with higher risks of cardiovascular problems, among others. Also, research shows that sleep deprivation can cause hormonal and metabolic changes that can lead to weight gain. If you have a problem getting enough sleep or feel you may have a sleep disorder, talk to your health care provider about what you can do.

Healthy Lifestyle Goals

One of the best ways to get yourself motivated to make lifestyle changes is to write your goals and read them every day. Be sure your goals are specific and realistic. Start with only one or two like the examples below:

- I will eat SOMETHING for breakfast EVERY morning.
- I will exercise aerobically at least 3-4 times a week for 20-30 minutes each session.
- I will physically play with my kids (frisbee, catch, walk, trampoline, etc.) at least four days a week.
- I will choose fruits and/or vegetables at least twice a day.
- I will do strength training exercises at least 2-3 times a week.
- I will reward myself (new clothes, movie tickets, etc.) each month that I feel I have worked well toward my goals and can notice a difference (in energy, in way clothes fit, on scale, in mirror, or in behavior).
- I will try to keep negative self-talk to a minimum, especially in front of my children.
- I will NOT watch TV out of boredom. I will try to think of something else to do first (play game with family, exercise, do chores, sleep).

Now it's your turn to write a few of your own goals:

This week, I will

Next week, I will

By the end of this month, I will

One Last Piece of Advice

Talking With Your Physician

(Adapted from Jay Siwek's *Consultation* column)

One thing that's always surprised me about some of the questions I receive is this:

Many are from people who are struggling with one problem or another and either haven't asked their own physician or, if so, haven't gotten a satisfactory answer. My advice: Ask, and make sure you get an answer you can understand. If your doctor doesn't do a good enough job for you, tell him/her, and give him/her a chance to do better. If that doesn't work, find a doctor you can trust to tell you what you need to know.



Doctors aren't perfect, and they can't know everything. My advice: Team up with your doctor to decide on what's best for you. Be **PROACTIVE!** That means playing an active role in managing your health. This may take the form of getting equipment to keep track of your blood pressure, or a glucose meter to keep tabs on your blood sugar. Having assessments and screenings done regularly to monitor your health status, continuing with health and wellness education, and changing lifestyle behaviors are roles you can take to prevent disease. Learn more about your family's medical history.

I'm not talking about trying to second-guess your doctor. This doesn't mean searching the Internet and deciding what medicine you want your doctor to prescribe. It means learning about general health and your particular condition so you can look for ways to help manage it. It means looking out for possible complications of your illness, or drug side effects, so that you can recognize and treat them early on. It means keeping up with the latest advances, so you can discuss them with your doctor and see what's right for you.

It's often helpful to join a medical organization or self-help group that deals with your condition. They typically provide a wealth of information and occasionally some much-needed moral support during tough times.

Most of all, take responsibility for your health and wellness – you are the CEO of your life!